

TESTIMONY OF
LORNA HOGAN
MOTHER ADVOCATE
THE REBECCA PROJECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
WASHINGTON, DC

**OVERSIGHT HEARING: CONFRONTING RECIDIVISM: PRISONER RE-ENTRY AND A JUST
FUTURE FOR ALL AMERICANS**

THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 2, 2005

Good afternoon Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to be here today. My name is Lorna Hogan and I am the mother of four children. At the age of fourteen, I began abusing marijuana and alcohol as a way of coping with being physically, mentally, and verbally abused. I was afraid to tell anyone what was going on and self-medicating was the only way I knew that could ease the pain. After awhile, this combination was not working, I needed something stronger to help me cope with the abuse. I began using crack cocaine.

This drug would take me to horrible places I never imagined I would even go. The once clean police record I had became stained with drug related crimes I committed in order to support my habit. My children were definitely affected by my drug use. I wasn't a mother to them. My grandmother was raising them and when she became ill, I began leaving them with other people.

I just couldn't stop using. I had tried 28 day treatment programs but I was just detoxing. I was not getting help for the emotional pain I kept suppressed by using drugs. There were no services provided for me as a mother. There were no services for my children. There were no opportunities to heal as a family.

In December, 2000, I was arrested on a drug related charge and my children were placed with Child Protective Services. When I went before the judge in criminal court for sentencing, I begged him for treatment. The judge told me he heard it before. He told me that so many people come before him requesting treatment and the same individuals would appear before him again. I felt hopeless. I not only lost my children, I lost myself. I didn't know where my children were or what was happening to them. I felt I would never see them again.

In jail, I received no treatment. I was surrounded by women like myself, mothers with minor children. We were all there, in jail, suffering from untreated addiction, but there were no treatment services in jail for us.

When I was released there were no referrals to aftercare treatment programs. Instead I was released to the street at ten o'clock at night with four dollars in my pocket. I still didn't know where my children were. I went back to doing the only thing I knew, which was using drugs. I felt myself sinking back into a life of self-degradation.

Months later, by the grace of God, I finally found someone to listen to me, a child welfare worker who was assigned to my case. I disclosed to her that I had been using drugs for 26 years. I was referred to an 18 month family treatment program. The family treatment groups helped me to heal from domestic violence, helped me to understand that I was self-medicating to the problem instead of getting help for it. I had a therapist to help me address my childhood issues and my separation from my children. I had a primary counselor I could talk to at any time and I still do. I also had parenting classes that gave me insight on being a mother.

Today I am a graduate of the family treatment program. I acknowledge four years clean time from drugs and alcohol. My case with child protective services is closed. My children and I have been reunified for three years. We live in our own home in Montgomery County. My children are succeeding academically in school. I recently watched with pride and joy as my

children performed in a fall concert at school where they all sang in English, Japanese and French. We are a whole and strong and loving family today.

I would like to conclude my story by sharing with you how critical it is for women to receive treatment while they are incarcerated. Most incarcerated mothers are non-violent drug felons and they are untreated addicts. Mothers behind bars receive little or no opportunity to heal from the disease of addiction. This lack of treatment and support services for mothers is apparent at every point in their involvement with the criminal justice system. Pre-trial diversion, release services, court-sentenced alternatives and re-entry programs for women offenders are restricted in number, size, and effectiveness.

Mothers behind bars and mothers reentering the community need treatment. Mothers need comprehensive family treatment so that they may heal, and break the cycle of addiction and the revolving door of the criminal justice system.

If treatment is made available to mothers behind bars, to mothers returning to the community, so many families will have a real chance to heal from the disease of addiction. Like my family, they will have the chance to heal and not be lost to the criminal justice system.

Thank you